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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Dec. 23, 2005

Should I Have a Personal Stockpile of Tamiflu®?

No. There are several reasons why this is not a good idea.

- **Limited supply.** There are very limited supplies of influenza antiviral drugs, especially Tamiflu (oseltamivir). That supply needs to be used *during the current flu season* for people at high risk for hospitalization or death and to treat people who actually have the flu.
- **Government stockpile.** Both federal and state public health agencies are in the process of stockpiling antiviral drugs to address an initial outbreak in the event of a pandemic. This is part of the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Pandemic Influenza Plans. Alaska is developing a state stockpile and revising the state pandemic plan to ensure that Alaskans most in need of these drugs will be able to receive them if the need arises.
- **Drug resistance.** Overuse of Tamiflu (oseltamivir) will cause flu viruses to become resistant to these drugs. Resistance has already been seen in countries with high Tamiflu (oseltamivir) use.
- **Side effects.** Prescription drugs should only be used under the care and prescription of a qualified health care provider. Not everyone can safely take influenza antiviral drugs. The side effects can be serious, especially with certain medical conditions.
- **Drug interactions.** Tamiflu (oseltamivir) and other antiviral drugs may interact with other medications. They should be taken only while under the care of a physician and with the counsel of a pharmacist.
- **Cost.** Influenza antiviral drugs are expensive. Tamiflu (oseltamivir) costs more than \$65 for a 5-day course of treatment. To prevent influenza, Tamiflu (oseltamivir) must be taken for weeks to months, as long as the flu virus is circulating in the community.
- **Shelf life.** As with all drugs, influenza antiviral drugs are only good for a limited period of time. Since no one can predict when the next pandemic will occur, stockpiled drugs can become outdated and need to be replaced without ever being used.

Rather than personally stockpiling influenza antiviral drugs, it is the recommendation of public health officials that individuals take reasonable precautions to prevent their acquisition of disease and follow all publicized instructions if a flu pandemic erupts.

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